

Northern Sotho language

Northern Sotho or *Sesotho sa Leboa*, also known by the name of its standardised dialect *Pedi* or *Sepedi*, is a Sotho-Tswana language spoken in South Africa's northeastern provinces of Limpopo, Gauteng, and parts of Mpumalanga. According to the South African National Census of 2011, it is the first language of over 4,6 million(9,1%) people, making it the 5th most spoken language in South Africa.

Northern Sotho is often equated with its standerdized dialect which it is primarily based on,^[5] Sepedi, and continued to be known as *Pedi* or *Sepedi* for some years after the new South African constitution appeared. However, the Pan South African Language Board and the Northern Sotho National Lexicography Unit now specifically endorse the names *Northern Sotho* or *Sesotho sa Leboa*.^[6]

The original confusion arose from the fact that the (now official) Northern Sotho written language was based largely on the Sepedi dialect (from which missionaries first developed the orthography), but has subsequently provided a common writing system for 20 or more varieties of the Sotho-Tswana languages spoken in the former Transvaal. The name *Sepedi* thus refers specifically to the dialect of the Pedi people,^[7] while *Northern Sotho* refers to the official language of that name and to all the speech varieties it has been taken to cover.

The English version of the Constitution of South Africa refers to the language as "Sepedi".^[8] Its official translation into the language refers to it as "Sesotho sa Leboa" in the article about languages, but as "Sepedi" on the front page.^[9]

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Northern Sotho	
	Pedi
	Sesotho sa Leboa/ Sepedi
Pronunciation	/sɛˈpɛdi/
Native to	South Africa
Region	Gauteng, Limpopo, parts of Mpumalanga
Ethnicity	Pedi people
Native speakers	4.7 million (2011 census) ^[1] 9.1 million L2 speakers (2002) ^[2]
Language family	<div>Niger–Congo<ul style="list-style-type: none">Atlantic–Congo<ul style="list-style-type: none">Volta-Congo<ul style="list-style-type: none">Benue–Congo<ul style="list-style-type: none">Bantoid<ul style="list-style-type: none">Southern Bantoid<ul style="list-style-type: none">Bantu<ul style="list-style-type: none">Southern Bantu<ul style="list-style-type: none">Sotho–Tswana<ul style="list-style-type: none">Northern Sotho</div>
Standard forms	Sepedi
Writing system	Latin (Northern Sotho alphabet) Sotho Braille
Signed forms	Signed Pedi
Official status	
Official language in	 South Africa
Regulated by	Pan South African Language Board
Language codes	
ISO 639-2	nso (https://www.1

Notes

External links

Software

Dialects of Northern Sotho

Northern Sotho can be subdivided into Highveld-Sotho, which consists of comparatively recent immigrants mostly from the west and southwest parts of South Africa, and Lowveld-Sotho, which consists of a combination of immigrants from the north of South Africa and Sotho inhabitants of longer standing. The Highveld-Sotho consist of the Bapedi Marota (in the narrower sense), Marota Mamone, Marota Mohlaletsi, Phokwane, Batau Bapedi (Matlebjane, Masemola, Marishane, Batau ba Manganeng - Nkadimeng, Kgaphola, Nchabeleng, Mogashoa, Phaahla, Sloane, Mashegoana, Mphanama), Bakone, Baphuthi, Baroka, Bakgaga (Mphahlele, Maake, Mothapo), Chuene, Mathabatha, Kone (Ga-Matlala), Maserumule, Tlou (Ga-Molepo), Thobejane (Ga-Mafefe), Dikgale, Batlokwa, Batlokwa Ba Lethebe, Makgoba, Batlou, Bahananwa (Ga-Mmalebogo), Moremi, Motlathlana, Babirwa, Mmamabolo, Bamongatane, Bakwena ba Moletjie (Moloto), Batlhaloga, Bamohlala/ Ba Ga Mohlala, Banareng, Ba Hwaduba Ba Ga Magale and many others. The Lowveld-Sotho include the Lobedu, Narene, Phalaborwa, Mogoboya, Kone, Kgaga, Pulana, Pai, and Kutswe. Groups are named by using the names of totemic animals and, sometimes, by alternating or combining these with the names of famous chiefs.

History

Before Moshoeshe and his Basotho nation of Lesotho, Basotho people were there. Moshoeshe didn't found Basotho, but he founded a nation made up of Sesotho speaking people from different Sesotho speaking clans in which the British imperialist in Southern Africa erroneously called the Basotho nation cutting them off from the rest of other Basothos outside Lesotho in the Orange Free State and Transvaal in present day South Africa, Botswana as if Moshoeshe and his people were unique from other Basotho people. Basotho people were there before Moshoeshe the son of Mokhachane of another Basotho clan of Bamokoteli clan, united the smaller and vulnerable clans of Basothos under his Bakwena clan leadership during the Shaka wars of difaqane after other Basothos have migrated to different directions from their cradle in Ntswanatsatsi. Moshoeshe and his Bakwena clan and the rest of the other Basotho clan originates from Ntswanatsatsi in present day South Africa. Families moved

oc.gov/standards/i
so639-2/php/langco
des_name.php?code_
ID=332)

ISO 639-3

nso

Glottolog

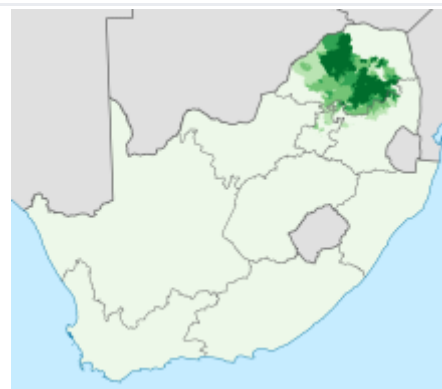
nort3233 (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/nort3233>)
Northern Sotho^[3]

Guthrie code

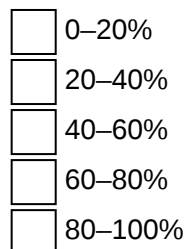
S. 32, 301–304^[4]

Linguasphere

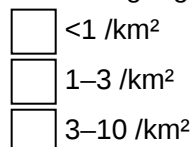
99-AUT-ed



Geographical distribution of Northern Sotho in South Africa: proportion of the population that speaks a form of Northern Sotho at home.



Geographical distribution of Northern Sotho in South Africa: density of Northern Sotho home-language speakers.



away from each other in Ntswanatsatsi and started clans using a totem as symbol of their clan (like crocodile (Kwena) which Moshoshoe' ancestors used) and different families moved to different directions within the precolonial South Africa under different leadership. Under different leadership some settled in the Western side, present day North West Province others spread around Ntswanatsatsi to the present day Free State and Lesotho, others to present day Botswana others to present day Zambia others moved to the present day Gauteng in South Africa and they became patriarchs of the founding fathers of Bakgatla which also gave birth to Northern Sotho which in turn gave birth to different Northern clans with their dialects like BaPedi , Batlokwa, Babirwa, etc and others ended up in intermarrying with other tribes they moved next to and mingled with like Swatis, Vendas and Tsongas and Ngunis and in some places these Northern Basotho' Sotho was diluted by the influence of these tribe they found in the area, they moved into and lived alongside. This is what happened to a subgroup of Northern Basotho who end up becoming Mapulana with their Sesotho influenced by Swati. Also some of the Northern Basotho having a common denominator of "apa" (meaning talk) with Vendas, I mean Balovedu, BaGubu and Babirwa of Bobirwa in the Southern part of Botswana near the Zimbabwean border. All these Northern Sotho clans have their chief of leader, they never had a paramount king, so, it will be absurd to call them BaPedi because the BaPedi kings have never been their kings. They did their own things from Ramokgopha of Batlhokwa, Malebogo of Bahanawa, Matlala, etc, they were never part of the Pedi kingdom.

<input type="checkbox"/>	10–30 /km²
<input type="checkbox"/>	30–100 /km²
<input type="checkbox"/>	100–300 /km²
<input type="checkbox"/>	300–1000 /km²
<input type="checkbox"/>	1000–3000 /km²
<input type="checkbox"/>	>3000 /km²

Pedi	
Person	Mopedi
People	Bapedi
Language	Sepedi
Country	Bopedi



Play media

A speaker of the Northern Sotho language recorded for Wikitongues

Classification

Northern Sotho is one of the Sotho languages of the Bantu family.

Although Northern Sotho shares the name *Sotho* with Southern Sotho, the two groups have less in common with each other than they have with Setswana.^[10]

Northern Sotho is also closely related to Setswana, sheKgalagari and siLozi. It is a standardised dialect, amalgamating several distinct varieties or dialects.

Until recently, *Lobedu* (also *Khilovedu* or *Khelobedu*) used to exist only in an unwritten form, and the standard Northern Sotho language (known as Sepedi (<https://careertimes.co.za/past-papers-and-memos/grade-12/sepedi-first-additional-language-grade-12-past-papers-and-memos/>)) and orthography was usually used for teaching and writing by this language community. As of 2018, a Khilovedu dictionary is being compiled in addition to proper Khilovedu orthography which is also in the process of being developed.

The monarch associated with this language community is Queen Modjadji (also known as the Rain Queen). Lobedu is spoken by a majority of people in the Greater Tzaneen, Greater Letaba, and BaPhalaborwa municipalities, and a minority in Greater Giyani municipality, as well as in the Limpopo Province and Tembisa township in Gauteng. Its speakers are known as the Balobedu.

Sepulana (also sePulane) exists in unwritten form and forms part of the standard Northern Sotho. Sepulana is spoken in Bushbuckridge area by the MaPulana people.

Northern Sotho is also spoken by the Mohlala people.

Other varieties of Northern Sotho

Apart from the Sepedi dialect itself, other languages or dialects covered by the term "Northern Sotho" appear to be a diverse grouping of communal speech-forms within the Sotho-Tswana group. They are apparently united by the fact that they are classifiable neither as Southern Sotho nor as Tswana.^[11]

Very little published information is available on these other dialects of Northern Sotho, but these have been reported:

- kheLobedu (khiLobedu or seLobedu)
- seTlokwa
- seBirwa
- Serwa(Sekone)
- sePulana
- seKhutswe
- seTswapo
- SePai (transitional between Sotho-Tswana and Zulu/Swati)
- Banareng, Ba Ga Mohlala
- Sebididi (Sotho/Tswana) spoken in Setateng
- Phahladira
- Motlathlana
- Tala
- Moremi
- Ga-Monyeki
- Abbotspoort
- Banareng
- Ba Ga Mohlala Setswako Language, a dialect of Northern Sotho/Sepedi Language

1. Narene/Banareng of Letswalo and Mahlo have been localized in Tzaneen and Phalaborwa area as a group of people, bounded and living together and sharing the same linguistic norms of Sepedi or Northern Sotho dialect which is peculiar to Banareng/Nareng in Tzaneen and Phalaborwa are, Limpopo in South Africa.

Reference:

Van Warmelo (1935) concerning Nareng/ Banareng of Letswalo and Mahlo, on Social Varieties of Northern Sotho:

Van Warmelo (1935) 1.5.1.1 Central Sepedi North-eastern cluster

1.5.1.3 North-eastern dialect cluster Lobedu, Phalaborwa, Šai (Mašišimala), Mametša, Letswalo, Nareng, Mahlo, Mmamabolo, Kolobe, Kgaga and Hananwa.

http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/4824/dissertation_ramajela_mc.pdf

2. Ba Ga Mohlala/Ba Mohlala (Schoonoord) have been localized in Schoonoord as a group of people, bounded and living together and sharing the same linguistic norms of Sepedi or Northern Sotho dialect which is peculiar to BaMohlala/Ba Ga Mohlala in Schoonoord, Limpopo in South Africa.

Reference:

Van Warmelo (1935) concerning Ba Ga Mohlala/Mohlala (Schoonoord), and Mohlala (Pilgrims' Rest), on Social Varieties of Northern Sotho: Litabe chieftains was immediately moved to Lesotho. they did not fit in Northern dialect.

Van Warmelo (1935) 1.5.1.1 Central Sepedi dialect cluster

Van Warmelo (1935) 1.5.1.1 Central dialect cluster Pedi (Maroteng), Pedi (mixed), Tau, Kwena, Ntwane, Kone, Tswako, Mohlala (Schoonoord), Nareng of Tswako, Mohlala (Pilgrims' Rest), Mphogo (Kgweri), Nkowane and Roka.

<http://www.mohlalaads.co.za/>

Reference:

http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/4824/dissertation_ramajela_mc.pdf

[1] (<http://www.mohlalaads.co.za/>)

- Thabo Mbeki villages and surrounding farms north-east of the coal mining town Lephalale (formerly Ellisras)

The morphological and possible lexical variation among these dialects has led to the above assertion that 'Northern Sotho' is no more than a holding category for otherwise unclassified Sotho-Tswana varieties spoken in north-eastern South Africa. Maho (2002) leaves SePhalaborwa and the "East Sotho" varieties of SeKutswe, SePai, and SePulana unclassified within Sotho-Tswana. Their precise classification would appear to be a matter for further research.

Writing system

Sepedi is written in the Latin alphabet. The letter š is used to represent the sound [ʃ] ("sh" is used in the trigraph "tsh" to represent an aspirated *ts* sound). The circumflex accent can be added to the letters *e* and *o* to distinguish their different sounds, but it is mostly used in language reference books. Some word prefixes, especially in verbs, are written separately from the stem.^[12]

Phonology

Vowels

Northern Sotho vowels

	<u>Front</u>	<u>Back</u>
<u>Close</u>	i	u
<u>Close-mid</u>	e	o
<u>Open-mid</u>	ɛ	ɔ
<u>Open</u>	a	

Consonants

Northern Sotho consonants

		<u>Labial</u>			<u>Alveolar</u>		<u>Post-alveolar</u>	<u>Velar</u>	<u>Glottal</u>
		plain	prepalatal	alveolar	plain	lateral			
<u>Stop</u>	ejective	pʼ	pʃʼ	psʼ	tʼ	tlʼ		kʼ	
	aspirated	pʰ	pʃʰ	psʰ	tʰ	tlʰ		kʰ	
<u>Nasal</u>		m			n		ɲ	ŋ	
<u>Affricate</u>	ejective				tsʼ		tʃʼ		
	aspirated				tsʰ		tʃʰ	kxʰ	
<u>Fricative</u>	voiceless	f	fʃ	fs	s	ɬ	ʃ		h~ɦ
	voiced	β	βʒ				ʒ	ɣ	
<u>Rhotic</u>					r	ɽ			
<u>Approximant</u>		w				l	j		

Within nasal consonant compounds, the first nasal consonant sound is recognized as syllabic. Words such as *nthuše* "help me", are pronounced as [ɲtʰuʃe]. /n/ can also be pronounced as /ŋ/ following a velar consonant.^[13]

Urban varieties of Northern Sotho, such as Pretoria Sotho (actually a derivative of Tswana), have acquired clicks in an ongoing process of such sounds spreading from Nguni languages.^[14]

Vocabulary

Some examples of Sepedi words and phrases:

English	Sepedi
Welcome	Kamogelo (noun) / Amogela (verb)
Good day	Dumela (singular) / Dumelang (plural) / Thobela and Re a lotšha (to elders)
How are you?	O kae? (singular) Le kae? (plural, also used for elders)
I am fine	Ke gona.
I am fine too, thank you	Le nna ke gona, ke a leboga.
Thank you	Ke a leboga (I thank you) / Re a leboga (we thank you)
Good luck	Mahlatse
Have a safe journey	O be le leeto le le bolokegilego
Good bye!	Šala gabotse (singular)/ Šalang gabotse (plural, also used for elders)(keep well) / Sepela gabotse(singular)/Sepelang gabotse (plural, also used for elders)(go well)
I am looking for a job	Ke nyaka mošomô
No smoking	Ga go kgogwe (/folwe)
No entrance	Ga go tsenwe
Beware of the steps!	Hlokomela disetepese!
Beware!	Hlokomela!
Congratulations on your birthday	Mahlatse letšatšing la gago la matswalo
Seasons greetings	Ditumedišo tša Sehla sa Maikhutšo
Merry Christmas	Mahlogonolo a Keresemose
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year	Mahlogonolo a Keresemose le ngwaga wo moswa wo monate
Expression	Gontsha sa mafahleng
yes	ee/eya
no	aowa
please	hle
thank you	ke a leboga
help	thušang/thušo
danger	kotsi
emergency	tšhoganetšo
excuse me	ntshwarele
I am sorry	Ke maswabi
I love you	Ke a go rata

Questions / sentences	Dipotšišo / mafoko
Do you accept (money/credit cards/traveler's cheques)?	O amogela (singular) / Le amogela (tshelete/.../...)?
How much is this?	Ke bokae e?
I want ...	Ke nyaka...
What are you doing?	O dira eng?
What is the time?	Ke nako mang?
Where are you going?	O ya kae?
Numbers	Dinomoro
1	one -tee
2	two – pedi
3	three – tharo
4	four – nne
5	five – hlano
6	six – tshela
7	seven – šupa
8	eight – seswai
9	nine – senyane
10	ten – lesome
11	eleven – lesometee
12	twelve – lesomepedi
13	thirteen – lesometharo
14	fourteen – lesomenne
15	fifteen – lesomehlano
20	twenty – masomepedi
21	twenty one – masomepedi-tee
22	twenty two – masomepedi-pedi
50	fifty – masomehlano
100	hundred – lekgolo
1000	thousand – sekete
Days of the week	Matšatši a beke
Sunday	Lamorena
Monday	Mošupologo

Tuesday	Labobedi
Wednesday	Laboraro
Thursday	Labone
Friday	Labohlano
Saturday	Mokibelo
Months of the year	Dikgwedi tša ngwaga
January	Pherekgong
February	Dibokwane
March	Tlhakola
April	Moranang
May	Mopitlo
June	Phupu
July	Mosegemanye
August	Phato
September	Lewedi
October	Diphalane
November	Dibatsela
December	Manthole
Computers and Internet terms	Didirishwa tsa khomphutha le Inthanete
computer	sebaledi / khomphutara
e-mail	imeile
e-mail address	aterese ya imeile
Internet	Inthanete
Internet café	khefi ya Inthanete
website	weposaete
website address	aterese ya weposaete
Rain	Pula
To understand	Go kwešiša
Reed Pipes	Dinaka
Drums	Meropa
Horn	Lenaka

Notes

1. Northern Sotho (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/nso/>) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)
2. Webb, Vic. 2002. "Language in South Africa: the role of language in national transformation, reconstruction and development." *Impact: Studies in language and society*, 14:78
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4. Jouni Filip Maho, 2009. *New Updated Guthrie List Online* (<https://web.archive.org/web/20180203191542/http://goto.glocalnet.net/mahopapers/nuglonline.pdf>)
5. "Pedi | South African History Online" (<https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/pedi>). *www.sahistory.org.za*. Retrieved 26 May 2020.
6. "African Languages - Sesotho sa Leboa (Northern Sotho)" (https://africanlanguages.com/northern_sotho/). *africanlanguages.com*. Retrieved 26 May 2020.
7. Louwens, Louis J.; Kosch, Ingeborg M.; Kotzé, A. E. (1995). *Northern Sotho* (<https://books.google.com/?id=3HYOAAAAYAAJ&q=The+name+Sepedi+thus+refers+specifically+to+the+dialect+of+the+Pedi+people&dq=The+name+Sepedi+thus+refers+specifically+to+the+dialect+of+the+Pedi+people>). Lincom Europa. ISBN 978-3-929075-43-4.
8. "Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 - Chapter 1: Founding Provisions | South African Government" (<https://www.gov.za/documents/constitution/chapter-1-founding-provision#5>). *www.gov.za*. Retrieved 24 July 2018.
9. *MOLAOTHEO wa Repabliki ya Afrika Borwa wa, 1996*. Department of Justice and Correctional Services. 2014. p. 4. ISBN 978-0-621-39063-6.
10. "Sepedi First Language" (<https://careertimes.co.za/past-papers-and-memos/grade-12/sepedi-first-additional-language-grade-12-past-papers-and-memos/>). *Career Times*. Retrieved 21 February 2020.
11. See Doke, Clement M. (1954). *The Southern Bantu Languages. Handbook of African Languages*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
12. *Pukuntšu ya polelopedi ya sekolo: Sesotho sa Leboa/ Sepedi le Seisimane: e gatišitšwe ke Oxford = Oxford bilingual school dictionary: Northern Sotho and English*. De Schryver, Gilles-Maurice. Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa. 2007. pp. S24–S26. ISBN 9780195765557. OCLC 259741811 (<https://www.worldcat.org/oclc/259741811>).
13. Louwrens, Kosch, Kotzé, Louis J., Ingeborg M., Albert E. (1995). *Northern Sotho*. München: Lincom. pp. 4–11.
14. Ethnologue.com: Languages of South Africa (https://web.archive.org/web/20170410220057/http://archive.ethnologue.com/15/show_country.asp?name=ZA)

External links

- Dryer, Matthew S.; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2013). "Northern Sotho language" (http://wals.info/languoid/lect/wals_code_stn). *World Atlas of Language Structures Online*. Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology.
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Northern Sotho language (<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Pages/Language.aspx?LangID=srt>)
- Online Northern Sotho – English dictionary (<http://africanlanguages.com/sdp/>)
- Online Northern Sotho explanatory dictionary (<http://africanlanguages.com/psl/>)
- Pan South African Language Board (<https://web.archive.org/web/20071217141039/http://www.pansalb.org.za/>)
-  Audio files in Pedi at [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Software

- Spell checker for OpenOffice.org and Mozilla (<https://web.archive.org/web/20070114015602/http://translate.org.za/content/view/1610/54/>), OpenOffice.org (<https://web.archive.org/web/20070324112647/http://translate.org.za/content/view/17/32/>), Mozilla Firefox web-browser (<https://web.archive.org/web/20070210160756/http://translate.org.za/content/view/1611/54/>), and Mozilla Thunderbird email program (<https://web.archive.org/web/20070324203655/http://translate.org.za/content/view/1612/54/>) in Northern Sotho
 - Translate.org.za (<http://translate.org.za/>) Project to translate Free and Open Source Software into all the official languages of South Africa including Northern Sotho
 - Keyboard with extra Northern Sotho characters (<https://web.archive.org/web/20070106152530/http://translate.org.za/content/view/24/41/>)
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